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HENDERSON
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GARRETT &
DUNNER LLP

A base station for providing flexible data rate transmission in a communications system. The base station comprises an interface coupled to a processor coupled to a transmitter. The interface receives an incoming data stream. The signal processor receives the incoming data stream from the receiver and selects an operating downlink chip rate from at least two chip rates. The signal processor selects a spreading factor and spreads the incoming data stream with a spread data stream with a channelization code. The transmitter receives the spread data stream from the signal processor and transmits the spread data stream over an air interface.